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VERTICAL FILE United States Department of Agriculture  
MICROGRAPHIC MATERIAL Extension Service,  
★ JAN - 6 1935 Division of Cooperative Extension.  
O. E. S. LIBRARY (3) RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUBJECT MATTER AND METHODS  
FOR THE NUTRITION PROGRAM \*

Better feeding practices for rural children are leading to improved health in thousands of farm homes today as a result of extension teaching. However, studies made in several Eastern States in 1934 show that from one-fourth to one-half of the farm children in many areas have serious health defects related to poor nutrition. Large numbers of rural boys and girls are seriously underweight, have decayed teeth, show signs of susceptibility to tuberculosis and low resistance to other diseases. Studies show that these defects are linked with diets low in protective foods, especially milk and vegetables.

Reports show that our nutrition extension work in the Eastern States is influencing only about 5 percent of the farm homes that have children under 10 years of age. A canvass of many home demonstration groups shows that older women rather than young homemakers make up the greater share of the membership.

This situation calls for adjustment of our home demonstration program so that we may influence greater numbers of farm homes with children. It also calls for working closely with other agencies interested in child health. The committee makes the following suggestions looking toward a larger service to young homemakers in the foods and nutrition program:

How shall we find what the health and nutrition problems are in homes with young children?

1. Discuss this matter with county home demonstration councils and with community home demonstration groups, bringing up these questions: What

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\* Adopted by State home demonstration leaders and nutrition specialists at the Eastern States Extension Conference, New York City, February 21, 1935.

are the health conditions of children in the community? What health defects do they have? Which of these are related to poor nutrition? How important is it that young children develop good food habits?

2. Make the home demonstration group responsible for obtaining lists of young homemakers. They may get these names through schools, social workers, nurses, doctors, ministers, and organizations interested in children.

3. Visit a large sample of the homes listed, learn number and ages of children, health conditions, special family food problems. Invite homemakers to join local extension groups. Though some of these visits should be made by home demonstration agent and nutrition specialist, many of them may be made by volunteer leaders selected and prepared for this work.

What shall we do about it?

1. Some of the problems young mothers have are, getting children to enjoy milk and vegetables, planning for children's breakfasts and luncheons, dividing the food dollar, buying a growth-promoting diet at prices that they can afford to pay, keeping simple food accounts as an introduction to a family budget, raising more of the food supply to save money for other needs, saving time and money by planning meals ahead, simple entertaining.

2. Nutrition specialists report less enthusiasm for projects labeled "Nutrition" or "Child Feeding" than for projects offered to help solve perplexities of meal planning, money or time management, child guidance, or family relationships. When such titles are used as, "Your money's worth in foods", "Stretching the food dollar", and "Living happily with your children", these projects are received with appreciation.

3. In organizing projects for younger women, relate subject matter of foods and nutrition to child development, home management, clothing, and



recreation in order to meet the larger problems of successful living.

4. In meetings, aim to arouse discussion, bring out problems, stimulate observation and reading, as well as to give instruction. Utilize experience and initiative of the group.

5. Plan some meetings in which husbands and fathers have a definite part; set up occasional panel discussions or debates in which men and women participate; plan recreational features to supplement meetings of younger men and women.

Make it easy for young mothers to attend meetings

Some communities have worked out this problem successfully as follows:

1. Have a transportation committee composed of older members of home demonstration groups.
2. Have each member of the older organization responsible for bringing at least one young mother to child-development study clubs and seeing that her children are cared for during the meeting.
3. Arrange for care of children while mother is at meeting.
  - a. Older group members volunteer to take charge of children in own home during mother's absence at meeting.
  - b. Volunteers at meeting place care for children using toys and equipment assembled by home demonstration club members.
  - c. Girls in home-economics classes in high school care for children under guidance of home-economics teacher.

Contacting young mothers unable to attend meetings

1. Circular letters with return cards requesting material are used by several States. Maine has had high returns on its recent letter series, based on timely foods and nutrition activities and problems of young mothers.

Best returns were for garden and canning information.

2. Radio talks were given for young homemakers; New Jersey has cooperated with the State Parent Teachers Association by giving a program for organizing radio listening groups. After listening to radio talks trained leaders handle discussion and send in questions.

3. Mothers who agree to use material brought them by a member of the community group may be enrolled as associate members of the group.

Reducing the agent's load of meetings to make time for more contacts with younger women

1. Give more responsibility to local leaders for conducting well-established groups.

2. West Virginia has for several years used a series of program leaflets entitled "Adventures in Living." Each leaflet contains homemaking subject matter set up to stimulate interest and serve as a basis for discussion. It also contains discussion questions, program outline to guide the leader, suggestions for home activities, and a brief reference list. These leaflets can be used effectively in absence of the agent.

Contacts with organizations interested in children

1. County councils of health and nutrition provide opportunities for cooperation with agencies interested in child health.

2. Extension workers can advance child nutrition through contacts with nurses, doctors, relief and rehabilitation workers, teachers and P.T.A.'s. Exhibits set up for such groups have a wide spread of influence.

3. Cooperation in child clinics usually provide cordial contacts and makes possible help in special problems.

4. Cooperation in the school-lunch program is effective in improving the condition of large numbers of children.



5. Discussion meetings with parents of school children, organized by grade teachers, bring out young mothers. Time so invested by the extension worker usually brings good returns.

Opportunities in the 4-H club program

1. Shape the growth or health program of the 4-H clubs to get members to make needed improvements in their own food habits and to influence younger brothers and sisters. Massachusetts is carrying on a "Protect your smile" campaign which interests club members in good food habits as well as in care of the teeth.

2. Guide 4-H club leaders to become a real influence for child nutrition.

Other timely projects

Planning the yearly food supply with the idea of "more and better living from the farm" needs emphasis, during the next few years, in this region.

Each State should enroll a number of result demonstrators this year to keep records showing the amount and value of food provided by the farm for family living and the amount and cost of food bought.

Respectfully submitted by committee,

Lorna Barber, New York, Chairman,  
Miriam Birdseye, Washington, Secretary.





